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The Washington Historical Quarterly

A CRITICAL DISCUSSION OF THE SITE OF CAMP WASHINGTON*

On the 28th day of October, 1908, the Washington State Historical Society, assisted by the Four Mound Grange, School Children and Friends, erected a massive granite monument on the south-eastern portion of Four Mound Prairie, which was to commemorate and point out to posterity the spot upon which was located Camp Washington, where Governor I. I. Stevens and his exploring and surveying parties camped from October 25th to 30th, 1853. The granite marker is located on the N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$, S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 4, Township 26 N., R. 40, E. W. M., and is on the farmstead of Mr. O. B. Gilstrap. It is situated in front of and to the right of the Four Mound Grange Hall and faces the farm residence of Mr. Gilstrap.

The Commemorative Exercises began at 11:30 o'clock on the morning of the 28th of October¹, just fifty-five years to the day from the time Governor Stevens and Captain McClellan were joined at the camp by Lieutenant Donelson with the main party of the eastern division of the survey², and was attended and witnessed by a large gathering of people. Among the persons present at that time were, the Hon. R. L. McCormick, President of the Washington State Historical Society; the Hon. Albert E. Mead, Governor of the State of Washington; Mr. Owen B. Gilstrap of Four Mound Prairie; Judge L. B. Nash; Colonel L. Febiger of the United States Army and Mr. W. H. Gilstrap, a cousin of Mr. Owen B. Gilstrap. Mr. W. H. Gilstrap gave the principal address of the day, in which he recounted historically the exploring and surveying expedition organized and sent out by the United States Government under the command of Isaac I. Stevens, and also set forth the

*This article was written as a partial fulfillment of a course of study in History Twenty-two, "Frontier History of the United States," at the State College of Washington during the Second Semester of the year 1915.—M. Orion Monroe.

¹Washington State Historical Society, Publications, II, 132.

²Explorations for a Railroad Route from the Mississippi River to the Pacific, 1853-56, XII, part 1, 149. Note: All subsequent citations to the volumes which comprise this work will be given as "Reports."

reasons why the Washington State Historical Society had agreed upon that particular spot as the ground upon which to locate the monument commemorating the site of Camp Washington.

The looseness of the work of the Historical Society in its efforts to locate the camp site together with the inconsistency of the arguments advanced by Mr. Gilstrap and a careful study of the evidence at hand concerning the proposition, leads us to believe that the granite slab erected by the Washington State Historical Society to commemorate the ground once occupied by Camp Washington has not been placed in the correct location. It seems that there has been some contention over the location of the monument for on page 232 of Volume II of the Washington State Historical Society Publications, Mr. Gilstrap makes the following statement:

"There are some points in history which historians, it seems, cannot agree upon. Some relate to the spots where historical events occurred, others relate to who were the principal characters. We do not propose to try to settle any of these debatable questions today; time will not permit us to enter into the discussion of any of them. However, my attention has been called to the fact that there are parties who contend that Camp Washington, where Generals Isaac I. Stevens and George B. McClellan, and their parties met and camped some two weeks in 1853; where Governor Stevens began and planned some of his work as Governor of Washington Territory, is not where the Historical Society erected a monument in 1908 to commemorate that great event.

"According to Governor Stevens' report his party went about eight miles beyond, or west of Spokane House to where there was plenty of water and grass, and six miles south of the winding ford on the Spokane River, which would make the spot at a small lake and spring on Four Mound Prairie. Indians who were there claim that was the place; they even go into details telling how the camp was laid off. Those who claim it was at another place, point out a spot fourteen or fifteen miles from Spokane House, and about nine miles from the winding ford. The former place is the only site in that neighborhood where there was plenty of both water and grass, which was necessary for the large party of both men and horses connected with the expedition."

The purpose of this article is to place before the public some facts concerning the matter and to prove that the site of Camp Washington was not where the marker erected by the Washington State Historical Society now indicates, but that the true site of the "First Capital of Washington Territory" is located in the forks of Coulee Creek, a branch of Deep Creek, and very near the center of Section 22, Township 26, N. R. 40, E. W. M., which is some six miles south-west of the location of the

granite slab on Four Mound Prairie. The writer's attention was first called to the possible error in the location of the camp Washington monument by Mr. Jacob A. Meyers of Meyers Falls, Washington. Mr. Meyers is a pioneer of Stevens County and a very close student of Northwest History and to him the writer is indebted for numerous photographs of the locality.

Mr. W. H. Gilstrap in his address at the exercises on Four Mound Prairie set forth some apparently good reasons for locating the monument on the spot the Historical Society placed it, but a careful reader of the "Reports of the Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practical and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, 1853-56" will notice that Mr. Gilstrap cited only such references as would allow the impression that the monument was being erected in the correct place. Even these references carry very little weight as far as locating the site of Camp Washington on Four Mound Prairie is concerned, as it is plainly evident that Mr. Gilstrap misinterpreted the records left by Governor Stevens and the members of his expedition. Mr. Gilstrap gave four reasons why the spot on Four Mound Prairie was selected, namely, that certain Indians, who claimed to have been present at the camp, said that the monument was being placed correctly; that Governor Stevens, in his reports, stated that the camp was located about eight and one-half miles beyond the Spokane House; and that the Governor also stated that it was located some six miles south of the winding ford on the Spokane River; and finally, that at the camp there was an abundance of grass and water, and that the spot on Four Mound Prairie abounded with these two necessities and furthermore, it was the only spot in that vicinity which did.

Mr. Gilstrap's first argument, which is his best, he states as follows:—

"Indians who were there claim that was the place; they even go into details telling how the camp was laid off".

This remark must be taken for what it is worth and no more, inasmuch as Mr. Gilstrap did not produce the names of any of the Indians, who were supposed to have been present at the camps some fifty-five years before, and consequently the reader is left in doubt as to the proof of the facts in the case. In considering the testimony of the Indians, we must remember that their minds are rather child-like and that they are easily influenced and consequently their word cannot be relied upon explicitly. Then to, it seems to be a trait of human nature for an individual to set forth the claim of having seen and talked to some great historical personage or witnessed some important historical event, and so, it is possible that the testimony of the Indians was entirely false, or it may be, that they were mistaken and confused in the time, the place, and the party, since sev-

eral parties had passed through that portion of the country during the period from 1840 to 1870.

Mr. Gilstrap insisted that Camp Washington was located some eight miles west of the Old Spokane House and he quotes the Stevens reports to that effect, but in no portion of the reports can a statement by Governor Stevens, Captain McClellan, Lieutenant Donelson or any other member of the party, be found, which expressly states that Camp Washington was located eight miles west of the ruins of the Spokane House. The records do show that the camp of the 17th of October was located some ten miles northwest of the Spokane House and this is the only camp of the Stevens Party which was situated within eleven miles of the Spokane House, but this camp was for one night only and in no portion of the writings was it ever mentioned as Camp Washington. There are many references³ in the records which indicate that the site of Camp Washington was located twelve and one-half miles from the ruins of Spokane House, but no mention is made of "eight miles from Spokane House" when referring to Camp Washington. Even though the true location for Camp Washington were eight and one-half miles from the Spokane House, the granite marker erected by the Historical Society on Four Mound Prairie would be out of position, inasmuch as it stands only a distance of five and one-half miles from the ruins of Spokane House. In his speech, Secretary Gilstrap made the following quotation⁴ from Governor Stevens' Reports:—

"October 17th,

leaving camp, Antoine, Osgood, Stanley and myself, turned from the trail to visit the falls of the Coeur d'Alene River, while La Vatte took the train ahead to the Spokane House. The road to the Spokane House was over a sandy prairie, interspersed with groves of pine. Crossing a dividing ridge with high steep banks, we came into the prairie in which the Spokane House is situated, in which there are two Indian villages. The train we found a mile below the junction, across the Spokane. The Indians indicating a good camp some distance beyond, we moved on eight and one-half miles to it, which we reached a half hour before sun-down. Here there was good grass and plenty of water, and we soon made a large fire. After arranging matter in camp, I observed about night-fall a fire down towards the river, and, strolling down to the place, came upon a little band of Spokane Indians, * * * * *

This is the particular reference upon which Secretary Gilstrap based his assertion, that Camp Washington was located eight miles west of the Spokane House. Let us notice the distance. The ruins of the Spokane

³Reports, I, 66-68; 363-364; XII, part 1, 146; XI, map 3; and profile map, Fort Benton to Walla Walla; I, 270.

⁴Washington State Historical Society, Publications, II, 141.

House is located about three-quarters of a mile from the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers, and the Governor states that he overtook the train a mile below the junction, across the Spokane, and then moved on from that point eight and one-half miles to the camp. This would place the camp of October 17th, which was not Camp Washington, some ten and one-quarter miles from the Spokane House.

The next fact to be taken into consideration in taking up this particular reference, is, that in the early days the present Spokane River from Lake Coeur d'Alene to the junction of the Little Spokane River, was called Coeur d'Alene River, while the present Little Spokane River was known as the Spokane River, and General Stevens always designated them accordingly in his writings. Lieutenant Saxon was the only member of the party who indicated⁵ the river above the junction with the Little Spokane as the Spokane. When Governor Stevens speaks of visiting the falls of the Coeur d'Alene River, he refers to the Spokane Falls, around which the present city of Spokane is located. Stevens speaks of reaching the Spokane House and of finding the train "a mile below the junction, across the Spokane". By the "junction," he means the junction of the present Spokane and Little Spokane rivers near the site of the Spokane House, and the "across the Spokane" refers to the fact that the train had crossed the Little Spokane River. Mr. Gilstrap would have us infer that Governor Stevens was referring to the present Spokane River, but such was not the case, and here at this point Secretary Gilstrap and the Historical Society clearly made a very serious misinterpretation.

When we take into consideration that Governor Stevens always referred to the Little Spokane River as the Spokane River and that when he departed from Father Gazzile and the Coeur d'Alene Mission on the 15th of October, he left with the express purpose of visiting Colville, we arrive at but one conclusion, and that is, that Stevens overtook the train after it had crossed the Little Spokane, about a mile below the junction of the rivers, and on the right bank of the Spokane. The party then moved on down the river eight and one-half miles and encamped for the night in the vicinity of the present village of Tum Tum. Common sense would have not allowed Stevens to cross the Spokane River and move over to Four Mound Prairie, for in doing so, he would have journeyed five or six miles out of his way, not to mention having to ascend and descend an elevation of nearly one thousand feet and making it necessary in moving on to Colville to recross the river next morning, which the Governor does not mention recrossing. Then too, there was a trail leading along the right bank of the Spokane, which branched across to the Chemakane

⁵Reports, I, 256.

through the hills near Tum Tum⁶. Again, Mr. Gilstrap quotes Stevens as follows:—

“After arranging matters in camp, I observed about nightfall a fire down *towards* the river, and strolling down to the place, came upon a little camp of Spokane Indians, * * * * *.”

Mr. Gilstrap has supplied the word “towards”, as the original report⁷ does not contain that word, but states:—

“* * * * *, I observed a fire down the river, and, strolling down to the place, came upon a little camp of Spokane Indians, * * * * *.”

If the word “towards” was intentionally supplied, the reason for so doing can be readily understood, inasmuch as, after traveling all day, a stroll of some five miles to and from the Spokane River with an elevation of nearly one thousand feet to overcome on the return, would have been a considerable distance, especially since the Governor and his party did not reach the camp until just a half an hour before sun-down.

There is little doubt but that the camp prepared by Governor Stevens and his party on the evening of October 17th, 1853, was located on the right bank of the Spokane River at a distance of about nine and one-half miles below the junctoin of the Little Spokane. And it is upon the location of this camp of the 17th, which as stated before was not Camp Washington, that Secretary Gilstrap and the State Historical Society base their claims for locating the Camp Washington monument on the farmstead of O. B. Gilstrap on Four Mound Prairie. The monument is located about seven and one-half miles south-east of the camp of the 17th. As further proof that the camp of October 17th was on the Spokane River, we have the report of Mr. Stanley, a portion of which reads as follows⁸:—

“October 18—Left our camp and the Spokane River at an early hour, and taking a more northerly course over a succession of pine clad hills, reached a valley from two to five miles broad, affording good grass and some arable land.”

Their change of direction to a “more northerly course” in order to cross the succession of pine clad hills, which are situated just north of Tum Tum, indicates clearly that the party had been following the trail which led along the right bank of the river in a north-westerly direction. The final statement of the report by Mr. Stanley is:—

“Distance from *the camp on the Spokane* to Colville, sixty miles.”

This fairly closes the point in question to any further argument.

Perhaps there are some who will argue that Governor Stevens estab-

⁶Reports, I, 368, line 41, and Mullan's map.

⁷Reports, XII, part 1, 136.

⁸Reports, I, 368, 369.

lished Camp Washington on the 17th of October and then on the following day made the hurried journey to Colville in order to meet Captain McClellan and his party. If the camp prepared on the evening on the 17th was a permanent camp, why did the Governor send the train on through to Colville? It could have been left at the camp as the information he received made it practically certain that it was Captain McClellan and his party that had reached the bank of the Columbia River, just opposite to Fort Colville. The Governor reached Colville at 9 o'clock in the evening of October 18th, and after conferring with Captain McClellan, he makes the following statement in his report⁹:—

"I accordingly resolved to bring the whole party together at a camp south of the Spokane River, * * * * *."

This was dated the 19th of October, apparently after the Governor had been in Colville some twelve or fourteen hours, and it is noticeable that he used the word "a" and not "the", which he would have done had he been speaking of a camp already established. Again on the 20th of October, Stevens states¹⁰:

"Garry started with a letter to Donelson, appointing as the place of meeting a valley south of the Spokane River, some ten or twelve miles south of the Spokane House. This spot is only a short distance off the trail leading from Walker and Eell's Mission to Walla Walla."

This statement refers to the true site of the camp, which was afterwards designated as "Camp Washington" or as it was called by some members of the party, "Camp Helse-de-lite"¹¹, and it shows that as late as October 20th, Governor Stevens had not viewed the camp site, in fact, he does not intimate that he even knows just exactly where it is, which is borne out by the fact that he placed the camp "ten or twelve miles south of the Spokane House" when the correct designation should have been ten or twelve miles south-west of the Spokane House.

A perusal of the Governor's writings will show that he and his party left Fort Colville on October 21st¹² and that they expected to reach the appointed place of meeting—Camp Washington—on the evening of October 24th¹³, but were unable to do so, and encamped that night near the Chemakane Mission, where Governor Stevens and Captain McClellan laid plans to accompany Chief Garry to the Spokane House on the following day, for on the 25th of October, we have the following statement¹⁴ by the Governor:—

⁹Reports, XII, part 1, 146.

¹⁰Reports, XII, part 1, 146.

¹¹Reports, I, 386.

¹²Reports, XII, part 1, 147.

¹³Reports, XII, part 1, 147, 148.

¹⁴Reports, XII, part 1, 148.

"Having left the necessary directions for raising the camp and moving it to the place of meeting with Donelson, agreeable to the arrangement made yesterday, Captain McClellan and myself accompanied Garry to the Spokane House, hoping there to hear from Donelson. * * * * * We then went to our *new* camp south of the Spokane, *which had been established whilst we were visiting Garry's place.*

Finally, if the camp established on the 17th day of October was Camp Washington, as claimed by Secretary Gilstrap, why should Governor Stevens, in speaking of the camp on the 25th day of October, designate it as a "new camp"?

Mr. Gilstrap's third argument, that Camp Washington was located, according to Governor Stevens' reports, some six miles south of the winding ford on the Spokane River, is approximately correct. The true site of the camp in question was located at a point six miles south-east (twenty-two and a half degrees east of south)¹⁵ of the winding ford, which is located about a half mile above the Long Lake Canyon. We shall have more to say concerning the location of this ford a little later.

The fourth point put forward by Mr. Gilstrap, which is concerning the abundance of water and grass, is stated as follows¹⁶:—

"According to Governor Stevens' report his party went about eight miles beyond or west of Spokane House to where there was plenty of water and grass, and six miles south of the winding ford on the Spokane River, which would make the spot at a small lake and spring on Four Mound Prairie. * * * * * The former place (Four Mound Prairie) is the only site in that neighborhood where there was plenty of both water and grass, which was necessary for the large party of both men and horses connected with the expedition."

To begin with, Mr. Gilstrap is referring to the camp of October 17th, the location of which we have established to be on the right bank of the Spokane River some ten and one-quarter miles from the Spokane House, and not on Four Mound Prairie as Mr. Gilstrap would have us believe. To be sure, Governor Stevens states that there was an abundance of grass and water here¹⁷, but this was not Camp Washington. No mention is made in the reports of the camp of the 17th being six miles south of the winding ford on the Spokane River and it was not so located, as we have already shown, nor can a reference be found in which the site of Camp Washington is placed on a "small lake". No doubt there was plenty of water and grass at the spot on Four Mound Prairie in the year 1853, but Secretary Gilstrap is in error in stating that Four Mound Prairie was the only site in that neighborhood where there was a sufficiency of water

¹⁵Reports, XI, map 3.

¹⁶Washington State Historical Society, Publications, II, 233.

¹⁷Reports, XII, part 1, 136.

"October 26.—

This brings us to the final consideration of the granite marker erected by the Washington State Historical Society on Four Mound Prairie. On the face of the monument is the following inscription:—

18Reports, I, 386.

If we are to believe the evidence left us by the reports of Governor Stevens, Captain McClellan and other members of the Stevens party, as set forth in the "Reports of the Explorations and Surveys to Ascertain the Most Practical and Economical Route for a Railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean, 1853-56." and it is needless to state that the above mentioned reports are authentic historical evidence concerning the subject in question, we have every possible reason to believe that the statement set forth on the face of the Four Mound Prairie Monument, that the Stevens Party met and camped at Camp Washington from October 17th to 30th, 1853, is absolutely false. The Governor, Captain McClellan and their parties met and camped at Camp Washington from October 25th to 30th, 1853. It is certainly clear that Governor Stevens and Captain McClellan were together at Fort Colville from the evening of the 18th day of October until the 21st day of the same month, Stevens leaving Colville on October 21st¹⁹, and McClellan on October 22nd²⁰. Camp Washington was not erected until October 25th, the Governor and Captain McClellan arriving at the camp, after their call with Garry at the Spokane House, on the evening of the same day²¹. Lieutenant Donelson and his party arrived at the camp on the 28th day of October²². From the Stevens Narrative of 1853, we have the following statement:—

"October 26, 27, 28, and 29—During these days I was occupied at our camp [Camp Washington] in making arrangements for moving westward."

Governor Stevens departed from Camp Washington at 4 o'clock on the afternoon of October 29th²³, and Captain McClellan left the following day, October 30th²⁴. Thus the location of the monument was not the only mistake made by Secretary Gilstrap and the Washington State Historical Society in the exercises in commemoration of the establishment of Camp Washington, held on Four Mound Prairie on the 28th day of October, 1908. The error in the date of the camp was due to Mr. Gilstrap identifying the camp of October 17th with Camp Washington, but there is very little excuse for this mistake, as every point in question concerning the date of Camp Washington is clearly set forth in the records, and the error in the location of the monument is just as absurd, for there is no reason to think that any of the parties mentioned, ever saw, much less camped upon, the spot upon which the monument is located, at the time mentioned.

¹⁹Reports, XII, part 1, 147.

²⁰Reports, I, 199.

²¹Reports, XII, part 1, 148.

²²Reports, XII, part 1, 149; I, 57.

²³Reports, XII, part 1, 149.

²⁴Reports, I, 199.

The site of Camp Washington is clearly described in several portions of the Stevens reports and by different members of the party, and by summing each and every statement concerning the description of the site of the camp, we are compelled to conclude that the official and true Camp Washington was located (1) some twelve and one-half miles south-west of the Spokane House²⁵, (2) six miles south-east of the winding ford on the Spokane River²⁶, (3) in the forks of a small stream²⁷, (4) in "a deep and narrow valley"²⁸, (5) and only "a short distance off the trail leading from Walker and Eel's Mission to Walla Walla"²⁹. The winding ford on the Spokane River is just five miles south of the Chemakane Mission³⁰ and the trail leading from the ford to the camp site "passed one small lake on the left"³¹. This lake is evidently one of several small lakes located in Sections 9, 10, 15, and 16, Township 26, N. R. 40, E. W. M. The above description of the "First Capital of Washington Territory", from which no difference of opinion can be found among the statements of the members of the expedition, places the camp site in the forks of Coulee Creek, in a small valley near the center of Section 22, Township 26, N. R. 40, E. W. M.

Let us determine exactly why the above location, namely, the forks of Coulee Creek, fulfills all the descriptions for the location of the camp site. The first points to be taken into consideration are that the records show that Camp Washington was located at a point twelve and one-half miles from the Spokane House and six miles from the winding ford on the Spokane River. These two facts have been proven by the written reports and by Map No. 3, which is entitled, "Rocky Mountains to Puget Sound", from the Explorations and Surveys made under the Direction of the Hon. Jefferson Davis, Secretary of War, by Isaac I. Stevens, Governor of Washington Territory. There is a slight discrepancy in the written descriptions of the direction of the camp site from the Spokane House, inasmuch as the Governor designates that it is located "some ten or twelve miles south of the Spokane House"³² and the spot in the forks of Coulee Creek is twelve and one-half miles south-west of Spokane House. This is due to the fact that the Governor gave this description of the location of the site while he was at Fort Colville, before he had ever seen the exact site of the camp and it is very probable that Stevens never made the trip between the Spokane House and Camp Washington. In his report³³ he tells of visiting Garry at Spokane House and then states:—

²⁵Reports, XI, map 3; XII, part 1, 146; I, 67, 68, 69, 270, 363, 364.

²⁶Reports, XI, map 3; XII, part 1, 148; I, 386.

²⁷Reports, XI, map 3; I, 199, 363.

²⁸Reports, I, 386.

²⁹Reports, XII, part 1, 146.

³⁰Reports, I, 386; XII, part 1, 148.

³¹Reports, I, 386.

³²Reports, XII, part 1, 146.

³³Reports, XII, part 1, 148.

“We then went to our new camp south of the Spokane, which had been erected whilst we were visiting Garry’s place. From the Chemakane Mission the train [trail] left the river, and passing over a rolling country covered with open pine woods, in five miles reached the Spokane, and crossing it by a good and winding ford ascended the plain, and in six miles, the first two of which was through open pine, reached Camp Washington.”

This might be interpreted to mean that Stevens and McClellan, after visiting Spokane House, retraced their steps and proceeded to Camp Washington via the winding ford. At least, the Governor says nothing of the trail from Spokane House to Camp Washington, and if the above is true, it can readily be understood how the Governor, in his description, might err in the direction of the camp from the Spokane House, his knowledge being based on information received at Colville. In Donelson’s report there is a statement³⁴ which says:—

“ * * * * * . The main party crossing to the Spokane River, thence proceeded to a point twelve miles west, where we met myself and Captain McClellan and his party.”

This statement refers to Camp Washington and locates the site twelve miles from the crossing at the Spokane House, which was situated about one-half mile below the house.

Map No. 3 is probably the most authentic evidence we have concerning the direction taken by the parties and the location of the different camps, being a recapitulation of the work and travels of the engineers of the expedition, and was drawn after Donelson and party had made the survey from the Spokane House to the site of the camp. It shows the route from Chemakane Mission to the winding ford on the Spokane River to be 12 degrees west of south and a distance of five miles, which places the ford correctly, on the boundary line between Spokane and Lincoln counties and a half mile above the high, rocky bluff at the Long Lake Canyon. The ford at this place is the only point on the Spokane River in that vicinity where such a rocky bluff is located. From the report by Second Lieutenant J. K. Duncan, we have the following statement³⁵:—

“From the mission the trail runs over a low hilly country, covered with open pine woods, to the Spokane River, leaving the Chemakane on the right. The descent to and the ascent from the Spokane River is abrupt and rocky. There is a tolerably good diagonal ford at this point—bottom gravelly and somewhat stony. The river is about seventy-five feet wide and three deep, current rapid. A very precipitous, high, rocky bluff is on the left bank, half a mile below the ford.”

³⁴Reports, I, 270.

³⁵Reports, I, 216.

This description coincides exactly with the point mentioned above, which is just above the Washington Water Power Company's Dam at Long Lake, Washington. From the winding ford the trail to Camp Washington runs twenty-two and a half degrees east of south, a distance of six miles, and from the crossing at Spokane House to the camp, the trail leads twenty-two and a half degrees (two points³⁶) south of west, a distance of twelve miles. The above mentioned points can be shown by the use of a protractor and scale on Map No. 3, and if an up-to-date map of Spokane County is employed and the same directions followed, the same point is located, namely, the N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$, S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 22, Township 26, N. R. 40, E. W. M.

The second point to be noticed is that the camp is located in the forks of Coulee Creek as shown by the Stevens Map No. 3, this alone being sufficient to locate the camp correctly even if there had been no written descriptions left concerning it, and the above mentioned point in Section 22 places it accordingly. The third point is that the written descriptions of the camp site place it in a valley. Assistant Engineer J. F. Minter in his report states that the camp was in "a deep and narrow valley", and he further substantiates this assertion by the statement³⁷:—

"October 30.—

To Sul-ilt-kwu. Ascended from the valley of our camp to the plateau."

Governor Stevens also describes the camp as being located in a valley south of the Spokane, and the forks of Coulee Creek being in a valley answers to this description. It is highly possible that Mr. Minter's description, "a deep and narrow valley," will convey to the reader the idea that Camp Washington was located in a canyon-like depression, but in all probability the representation is a trifle far-fetched. The valley in which the forks of Coulee Creek is located is not so very deep and canyon-like, but it does answer to the description of a valley and is a rather deep one when we take into consideration the contour of the surrounding country. The fourth point in the description of the location, places the camp "a short distance off the trail leading from Walker and Eell's Mission to Walla Walla". It is a difficult problem to exactly locate this old trail, but it is very probable that the Stevens party followed this trail in the journey from the Chemakane Mission to Camp Washington and from there on to Walla Walla. In several portions of the reports the word "trail" is employed in describing the road taken by the party. the Old Colville Wagon Road, which joined Fort Colville with Fort Walla Walla, followed the trail from Walker and Eell's Mission to Walla Walla and a glance at the map of the Colville Wagon Road and the road followed by the Stevens party will show that the two coincide very closely, especially

³⁶Reports, I, 174.

³⁷Reports, I, 386.

in the vicinity of Camp Washington. An inspection of the ground about the forks of Coulee Creek will show very clearly the remains of an old road or trail, which leads down the slope from the north-west and crosses the creek about two hundred and fifty yards below the camp site.

As further proof that the spot in the forks of Coulee Creek is the correct location for the site of Camp Washington, we have the following notation³⁸ from the reports of J. F. Minter:—

“October 30.—To Sul-ilt-kwu. Ascended from the valley of our camp to the plateau. Pass over a high rolling country, with occasional ravines and narrow strips of pine timber. Cross a deep and boggy stream * * * * * 5½.”

The figures 5½ designate that the stream crossed was a distance of five and one-half miles from Camp Washington. The stream referred to is the north fork of Deep Creek, which they would cross after covering a distance of five and one-half miles, their direction being slightly west of south³⁹. If Camp Washington had been located on Four Mound Prairie, the first stream to be forded would have been Coulee Creek, which they would have reached after having traveled a distance of two miles. Deep Creek would have been crossed after journeying four and one-half miles further. But notice the very next statement of Mr. Minter—

“Travel over a perfectly open and slightly rolling country; pass over rocky ridge near camp; camp on a small running stream, with good grass and poor wood * * * * * 2½.”

This locates Camp Sul-ilt-kwu, which was erected on the evening of October 30th, on the south fork of Deep Creek, which by the trail and map is just two and one-half miles south of the north fork. The Stevens Map No. 3 shows the camp of the 30th to be on the south fork of Deep Creek, although there is a mistake in the direction of the main body of Deep Creek, which was due to false information received from Spokane Garry⁴⁰. This discrepancy in the direction of the main body of Deep Creek as shown on the map only serves to prove that Camp Washington was not located on Four Mound Prairie, for if it had been so situated, the parties in moving south would have probably crossed the main stream of Deep Creek instead of the forks, and consequently the correct location of Deep Creek would have been ascertained. Secretary Gilstrap and the State Historical Society admit that the camp of October 30th, Camp Sul-ilt-kwu, was on the south fork of Deep Creek, and their map on the back page of the program of the Commemorative Exercises shows the camp so situated, but Mr. Gilstrap does not explain how Engineer Minter, in

³⁸Reports, I, 386.

³⁹Reports, XI, map 3.

⁴⁰Reports, XII, part 1, 150.

traveling south from Four Mound Prairie, could cross Coulee Creek without making a note of it in his journal.

The map of the region around Camp Washington, which is incorporated in the program of the Exercises, is a very mistaken affair even to the point of being ridiculous. In the first place, it is drawn, so it states, to the scale of one-fourth of a mile to the inch, and accordingly "Camp Washington" is shown located a bare one-quarter of a mile from the Spokane House and a trifle better than a quarter of a mile from the ford on the Spokane River. Such a discrepancy only serves to exhibit the carelessness with which Mr. Gilstrap and the Historical Society handled the entire proposition. The map shows the ford on the Spokane far from being in the correct location being situated about five miles up the river from the true winding ford at Long Lake, this being done in order to show the site on Four Mound Prairie a distance of six miles from the ford, the effect being lost, however, on account of the mistake in the scale. Another very peculiar mistake is the indicating of the route taken by Lieutenant Donelson and his party in reaching Camp Washington. According to Secretary Gilstrap, Lieutenant Donelson and his party in journeying down from Clark's Fork and the Pend d'Oreille, crossed the Spokane at a point above the mouth of Latah Creek and then followed along the left side of the river. One naturally wonders why such a mistake could be made, especially when the map and written reports by Lieutenant Donelson show his route from Lake Pend d'Oreille to be along the right side of the Spokane River until he crossed the river at the ford near the Spokane House, the ford being just below the junction with the little Spokane River, but a careful study of the situation at hand will show the reason why Secretary Gilstrap wished to have Donelson's route to the camp follow down the left bank of the Spokane, and his camp of the 17th of October at the junction of Latah Creek, instead of on the right bank of the Spokane in the Spokane Valley, as shown by the map⁴¹. The mouth of Latah Creek is about a mile and three-quarters south-west of the site of Donelson's camp of the 27th.

We know that Lieutenant Donelson and his party were, at this time, at work making a odometer and barometer railroad reconnaissance, and in the course of his work and under orders from Governor Stevens, he effected a junction with the Governor and Captain McClellan and their parties at Camp Washington on October 28th, 1853. From the report of Lieutenant Donelson, in an estimate on a permanent wagon road from Fort Benton across the Rocky Mountains to Walla Walla, we have the following statement⁴²:—

⁴¹Reports, XI, map 3.

⁴²Reports, I, 363, 364.

"113th day.—They go nineteen and a half miles and encamp on the Coeur d'Alene prairie.

"116th day.—They go nineteen and a half miles, cross the Spokane, and encamp on its left bank.

"117th day.—The wagons go 12.5 miles and encamp on a small stream in the prairie."

Turning to the next page, page 364, we find the following:—

" * * * * * ; 8 days to open the road to the Couer d'Alene prairie, 3 days to prepare the road as far as the crossing of the Spokane.

"116th day.—To prepare the road as far as Camp Washington.

"117th day.—8 hours' work."

In considering these two references, we must bear in mind that the Donelson party had no wagons after they left Fort Benton⁴³, in fact this entire report by Lientuant Donelson is hypothetical in nature, as shown by the statement at the beginning of the report:—

"The report is in the form of a narrative of the supposed daily progress of the wagons; an accompanying table exhibits the quantity and kind of work, and the time required for its performance."

In other words, Lieutenant Donelson and his party made a preliminary survey of the wagon road and stated his reports in terms of what the party building the road would have to do. The two extracts from the report signify that on the 113th day from the time the party is supposed to have left Fort Benton, they would move nineteen and a half miles and encamp on the Coeur d'Alene prairie, i. e., the Spokane Valley, some nineteen and a half miles from the crossing of the Spokane River, and then for three days they would labor preparing the road to the crossing, and on the 116th day, they would move on nineteen and a half miles, cross the Spokane River and encamp on its left bank. In order to interpret this correctly, we must bear in mind that Lieutenant Donelson traveled the route of the road, and, as stated before, the map shows that Donelson crossed the Spokane River at the Spokane House and this agrees with the written matter, for Donelson stated that on the next day, 117th day, they would move the wagons 12.5 miles and encamp on a small stream in the prairie, which would be the site of Camp Washington. Undoubtedly the spot referred to would be Camp Washington, for in the second extract, Donelson states that on the 116th day they would prepare the road as far as Camp Washington, while the camp and wagons are to be moved over on the 117th day, the camp and wagons always being moved after each new portion of the road has been completed.

The writer takes it, that the reason Secretary Gilstrap placed Donelson's camp of October 27th on the left bank of the Spokane at the mouth

⁴³Reports, I, 27, 38, 78.

of Latah Creek, was due to the fact, that, inasmuch as Lieutenant Donelson had plainly stated that from the camp of the 116th day, which would be situated near the ford on the left bank of the Spokane River below and across from the ruins of Spokane House, they would move on 12.5 miles to Camp Washington, and since the supposed site at Four Mound Prairie would be only four miles from the camp, if the camp was located on the left bank of the Spokane across from Spokane House, it became necessary, in order to gain his point, to place the camp at the mouth of Latah Creek, which is a distance of twelve miles or better from the site of the monument on Four Mound Prairie. To build a road from the mouth of Latah Creek along the left side of the Spokane River to Four Mound Prairie in one day, would have been a wonderful engineering feat, since they would have had to overcome a continual series of ravines and gullies. When we remember the trouble the Great Northern Railroad experienced in forcing an opening through that particular locality, we are forced to say that it would have been a blot on the engineering ability of Lieutenant Donelson, had he outlined the road along that same route. It is also interesting to note that the camp of the 116th day, which was a hypothetical one, had nothing to do with the Donelson camp of October 27th, and that the mouth of Latah Creek is seventeen or eighteen miles from the point in the forks of Coulee Creek.

Should anyone doubt that Lieutenant Donelson did go to the Spokane House, a perusal of pages 55 and 63 of Volume I of the Reports will put all such doubts to flight, especially when it is remembered that the expedition was of a military nature and moved under military orders. On page 55 we have an extract from the report by Governor Stevens, which reads:—

“To guard against Captain McClellan passing us, Lieutenant Donelson was instructed to send Lieutenant Arnold to Colville from the crossing of Clark’s fork by the northern trail, and to repair to the Spokane House, on the Spokane River, to receive additional instructions.”

On page 63 we find Order No. 3, dated from the Flathead Village of St. Marys, on the 2nd of October and addressed to Lieutenant Donelson. A portion of the order reads:—

“Your general course will be by the Jocko River to the Clark’s fork of the Columbia, thence to where the fork was crossed by Lieutenant Saxon, or some practical route between Clark’s fork and the Kootenaies River, and thence to the Spokane House, at the *crossing of the Spokane River*. * * * * * The Spokane crossing, near the Spokane House, is a central position, trains [trails] leading therefrom both to Colville and Walla Walla. At the crossing you may expect intelligence of Captain McCellan’s movements, and additional instructions either from Captain McClellan or myself.”

These orders were not changed for we have an extract, which has already been quoted in this article, from the report of Lieutenant Donelson, which reads:—

“The main party crossing to the Spokane River, thence proceeded to a point twelve miles west, where we met yourself and Captain McClellan and his party.

“Here terminated the operations directed in your instructions to me on the 2d day of October.”

On the 25th day of October the Governor and Captain McClellan made the trip to the Spokane House from their camp on the Chemakane, hoping to hear from Lieutenant Donelson⁴⁴.

Let us now compare the site in the forks of Coulee Creek with the spot upon which the monument is located on Four Mound Prairie in the light of the evidence at hand. It has been proved beyond reasonable doubt that the true site of Camp Washington was located at a point twelve and one-half miles south-west of the winding ford on the Spokane River, and the spot in the forks of Coulee Creek satisfactorily fulfills this description, while the point of Four Mound Prairie is about five miles from the ruins of Spokane House and some nine and one-half miles south-east of the winding ford on the Spokane. The reports show that Camp Washington was situated in a valley and the forks of Coulee Creek are so located, while the monument at Four Mound Prairie stands on a small knoll in the flat, open prairie. Governor Stevens stated that the camp was located a short distance off the trail leading from Walker and Eell's Mission to Walla Walla. Secretary Gilstrap brought forth no evidence which would show that the trail leading from Walker and Eell's Mission to Walla Walla passed across Four Mound Prairie near the site of the monument, while we have every reason to believe that the Walker and Eell's Mission Trail crossed Coulee Creek at a point about two hundred and fifty yards from the site, namely, a spot in the forks of said Coulee Creek, in a small valley in the N. E. $\frac{1}{4}$, S. W. $\frac{1}{4}$, Section 22, Township 26, N. R. 40, E. W. M.

Taking everything into consideration, it seems quite clear that the Washington State Historical Society located its marker and fixed the dates in the inscription without adequate study of the historical documents or wise interpretation of the material at hand. It has been eight years this October (1915) since the monument was erected on Four Mound Prairie, and it appears only right and proper that the Historical Society should reopen the question and take immediate steps to have the present slab removed and another stone, suitably and rightly inscribed, erected on the correct location, in order that the site of the “First Capital” of our Great Commonwealth may be located and set right for all time.

⁴⁴Reports, XII, part 1, 148.